Damage to apple crop in Himachal Pradesh

1699. SHRIMATI VIPLOVE THAKUR: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware that the unfavourable weather conditions over the past one year in Himachal Pradesh have taken a heavy toll of the apple crop with the total production declined by over 45 per cent as compared to the last year due to which apple growers have been put in a heavy debt and forced to leave apple farming;

(b) if so, Government's reaction thereto;

(c) whether Government has formulated any scheme for apple growers to tackle such natural calamities;

(d) if so, the salient features of the scheme; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (PROF. K.V. THOMAS): (a) Yes, Sir. The production of apple has reduced from 510161 MT during 2007-08 to 279759 MT, with a total decline in production by 45.16% *i.e.* 230402 MT as compared to the last year due to unfavorable weather conditions over past one year in Himachal Pradesh. However, the apple growers are not leaving apple farming in Himachal Pradesh due to rise in prices of Apple which has compensated the growers for loss in fruit production.

(b) The Government of Himachal Pradesh is encouraging the growers to adopt cultivation of new improved strains recently imported by the Department, which are less sensitive to adverse climatic conditions during flowering and fruiting as compared to delicious group of Apple.

(c) and (d) Yes, Sir. The Government of Himachal Pradesh has implemented Weather Based Crop Insurance Scheme for Apple from Rabi 2009-10 season on pilot basis covering adverse climatic conditions affecting apple production such as chilling requirement, temperature fluctuation, rainfall requirement and unseasonal/excess rainfall for which a total premium 50% (@11.5% + 10.30% ST) of the sum insured per tree shall be payable by the growers. The balance 50% amount of premium shall be borne by Central and State Govt. on equal share basis. Besides, Government of India has approved a sum of Rs.88.93 crores for release from National Calamity Contingency Fund (NCCF), including Rs.11.82 crores for input subsidy to Horticulture farmers of the State.

(e) Does not arise.

Benefit under NAIS to apple growers in Himachal Pradesh

1700. SHRIMATI VIPLOVE THAKUR: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) the total number of farmers benefited under the National Agricultural Insurance Scheme (NAIS) in the country including Himachal Pradesh during last three years, year-wise;